

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945

D-DAY

Remembering D-Day preparations in South Harting

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With the increased war action I remember hearing the bombers flying off on their various night raids, and with the approach of what we now know as D-Day, many more troops arrived in the area. The Warren was packed with hundreds of soldiers living under canvas and although we had no idea what was about to happen, the troops must have known something big was imminent and so went all out to enjoy themselves. During 'double summer time' when the evenings were very light until nearly midnight, everyone had a wonderful time and just before D-Day we had a super open-air dance in South Gardens.

Then suddenly one morning everything changed. The soldiers quickly packed up, the roads were choc-a-bloc with army vehicles and they started to move out. All the usual people were standing at the bus-stop that morning, waiting for the bus to go to work, but no bus arrived. We were taken into Petersfield by a kind driver of an empty lorry, only to find out that my workplace had been taken over by the Military Police who were organising troop movements. They moved out after only a couple of days during which I seemed to make endless cups of tea. The news quickly spread that the troops had gone and so the invasion of France became common knowledge. I found myself thinking of those I had known and hoping they were alright and I did receive a letter from one soldier on June 26th and one or two after that. With the invasion, many more planes flew out overhead and at times it seemed the sky was black with Lancasters and Wellingtons.

Eventually the Germans were defeated and with the ending of the war, the celebrations began.....

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